

Proposed Preamble

The City of Trinidad (hereinafter City) is a small town with a 2016 population of approximately 350 people. Historically, most houses in the City accommodated resident owners or long-term renters. There has, however, been an ongoing trend that seems to be accelerating wherein many houses in the City have been converted to Short Term Rentals (STRs).

The effect on the City has been a noticeable change within many residential neighborhoods. In the Winter, many houses in the City are vacant as STR's are not rented as often in the Winter months. In the Summer, STR's are occupied by transient visitors often in higher numbers than a residential home with tourists concerned with their recreation and vacation pursuits but not always displaying an appropriate level of concern for City residents' right to quiet peace and enjoyment of neighboring property.

By this new STR Ordinance, the City has tried to strike a proper balance between City residents' concerns and the rights of property owners, STR owners and operators as well as visitors to the City. The City Council has made the following findings and determinations after long and careful study of the issues.

- * There has been a steady increase in the number of short-term vacation rentals in the City over the past 15 years.

- * The proportion of homes in the City being used primarily as vacation rentals has risen from approximately 5 percent of the total dwelling units in the City in 2000 to approximately 18 percent in 2014.

- * A City Ordinance regulating some aspects of vacation rentals went into effect in 2015, but the Ordinance did not address the overall number of vacation rentals in the City.

- * Vacation rentals have the potential to alter the residential character of neighborhoods with impacts related to traffic, parking, noise, occupancy, septic system capacity, housing availability, real estate prices, neighborhood character, City population, the availability of citizens to participate in the community; and the quality of life in the City for both residents and tourists.

* An increasing number of City residents have indicated growing concern over the impacts caused by STR's and the increased number of homes becoming STR's. These residents have called on the City to find a balance between residential and vacation rental uses.

* As the percentage of STR's in the City has risen, fewer neighbors are present except as temporary inhabitants during the tourist season affecting neighborhood security and social interactions. Less neighbors often means more crime as there are fewer people to observe and report crime. Residents have fewer neighborhood connections available for mutual assistance. The more long-term residents present in a neighborhood as opposed to tourists increases normal neighbor relationships and mutual assistance. It is hard, for example, to borrow sugar or a lawn mower from a tourist or to obtain help with an accident.

* The City often cannot find residents who will volunteer for service with the Fire Department, the City Council or the Planning Commission and a further reduction in residents will exacerbate the problem.

* There will likely be a surge in fire insurance rates if the City cannot properly staff its volunteer Fire Department.

* Governance of the City could revert to control of a less-representative county government if the City's incorporation cannot be maintained.

* California state law and the Humboldt County General Plan require the City to maintain a mix of affordability in its residential housing stock, but affordability and accessibility of housing for long-term residents is diminishing as the City's mix of housing is skewing toward STR's. Houses for sale are often bid up in price by non-residential buyers who believe that an STR operation makes the property more valuable. The City finds that there is often a close correlation between sales price and expected revenue generated by an STR and many buyers believe that STR's generate more revenue than long-term rentals. Young families who cannot afford to buy a home in the City, but who can afford conventional long-term rentals (LTR's), are finding fewer LTR's available as new owners are opting for more profitable STR's.

* A cap on the total number of STR's allowed will help mitigate problems of diminishing residential housing and the associated decline in resident population.

* By regulating the transferability of STR licenses, STR licenses are less likely to cause further increases in residential prices.

* By establishing standards for visitor behavior, the City will mitigate the inherent conflict between tourists who want to enjoy their vacations and nearby residents who need peace and quiet in order to sleep in order to be ready for work or to raise their children.

* Standards for health and safety will ensure appropriate facilities for tourists.

* More STR's mean fewer families with children in the Trinidad Elementary School, and parents to serve on the School Board.

* Less residents means less citizens to serve in community organizations like the Lions Club, Civic Club, Museum Society, Trinidad Coastal Land Trust, and Friends of the Library.

* Engaged citizens are the basic fabric that makes up a community and too high of a tourist to resident ratio can dramatically alter the health and welfare of the City and its residents.